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SCRIPTURE MEMORY WORK

GERRIT VERKUYL



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Scripture Memory Work

Scripture Memory Work

A Handbook containing Fifty-two
Selections with Helps for the Leader

BY

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*Educational Superintendent, North Central District,
Presbyterian Board of Publication and
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TO THE
Christian People of America

WHO THROUGH PARK COLLEGE HAVE OPENED
TO ME, A STRANGER, THE GATES OF HIGHER
EDUCATION, THIS HANDBOOK IS
THANKFULLY DEDICATED

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SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS

THE *Value of Scripture Memory Work.*
The memorizing of Scripture is gradually coming back into its own. Half a century ago and more it was overdone by many and done wrongly by the rest. Naturally the pendulum then swung to the opposite extreme to the effect that both in public schools and in religious teaching all memory work became liable to taboo. More recently, however, secular educators have begun to see their mistake. A generation has grown up which lacks lamentably in the use of lofty expressions. Religious workers, too, are once more willing to take up the memorizing of choice passages from sacred literature. But this time we are prepared to pursue the work with more intelligence; because previous mistakes have taught us.

Verbal memory work means in its simplest terms just this: The child begins to think before it starts to talk. The words which it finds ready for use have come down from previous generations. Without such words the child's thoughts

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cannot be clothed; in fact it is a serious question whether without words there can be much clear and progressive thinking of any kind. This is certain, that the more choice the words are which the child receives from its environment the more choice shall be the thoughts that are clothed by those words. This principle continues throughout childhood and youth and to some degree throughout life.

The sons and daughters of God whose words the Bible delivers to our generation have held communion with the heavenly Father. They have stood at His knees and have whispered to Him their needs; while He graciously bowed down and responded with warnings and promises. We call this "revelation." It is the richest efflorescence of the unseen world. For the interchange of such lofty thoughts the loftiest language of all literature was employed.

In every normal life the time will come when for the expression of the deepest and highest feelings the most exalted language of all the ages becomes necessary. The glories of the sky; the majesty of God; the wonderful love of Christ; the sacred relations between man and his Maker; the friendship, also, that exists between man and man, all these and many more make their appeal to the human heart until a greater mode of utterance is sought than thus far has been employed. To sense these wonders and to

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have the right words to give vent to such sacred feelings is a blessing as great as it is for the dumb to speak.

The Verbal Memory Years. While it is true that people who have past the years of childhood are still able to memorize much Scripture,—a fact to which the author can give personal testimony, for he memorized hundreds of verses after his twenty-third birthday and still continues the good practice,—yet the child from seven to fourteen is particularly fitted for such practice. The brain cells have received more quality than during earlier years, but the habit of reasoning has scarcely begun. These seven years are like the fat years of Egypt when the storehouses must be filled against possible years of famine. Not everything that is learned may be fully understood. Just as at Cana of Galilee the water was turned to wine, so may these passages seem water when they are learned and prove to be wine in later life. But we must try in every way to help our children understand the meaning of every passage. For this purpose this booklet has been prepared.

In the preparation of these lessons the Senior and Adult departments of the Sunday school were not in view; nevertheless it were well for those who would “win many to righteousness” to master a goodly number of them. But the selec-

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tions have been made for Primary and Junior children chiefly, including those in the Sunday school, those in Junior Societies and Mission Bands, those, also, in Daily Vacation Bible Schools and in Religious Day-schools

METHODS OF MEMORIZING

The Leader's Part. There is memory work enough in this booklet for three years in the Sunday school and other organizations for children, or for three summers of Daily Bible School work. The teacher may select passages from among the various sections, or decide upon one or two sections for a given period. It will be noted that the selections are from many portions of the Bible. The choice should depend upon the teachings which seem most needful for the pupils. Sections I and V might be taken for the first year, Sections II, IV and VI for the second year, and Sections III, VII and the Conclusion for the third year. Among some children it will prove necessary to lessen the portions, lest they grow discouraged.

The teacher must acquaint himself thoroughly with the meaning of the passage to be mastered. To this end both text and context should be read many times. It is well, also, to read the Child Version where that is furnished. But the centre of the teaching is the child, and the relation of the passage to the children individually and in

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their group must forever be in the teacher's mind.

The child version has been written to familiarize teacher and pupils with the intended meaning of the passage; but not for memorizing.

The teacher should try to memorize the selected passage, but need not depend upon the memory in the drill work. Either the Bible or the written selection may be held accessible during the drill. Very few, indeed, are those who can lead memory work without the passage before them.

Drills are given from the platform. Where the pupils are not supplied with Bibles the passage may be written on a blackboard for them so that both eye and ear shall assist in fastening the words.

In order that the right meaning be conveyed, the leader should first read the passage slowly and impressively. Then the group may read it through in company with the leader. After that boys may read one verse and girls another. One more reading and the first attempt can safely be made to recite the passage without looking at the Bible or blackboard. This may go haltingly; but it should be repeated. Then liberty should be given to look once more at the passage. With this re-enforcement the response is usually voluminous.

But this does not mean that every pupil

present is able to recite the passage; only a few can do so. All have helped each other and have been helped in turn. By means of a story, a song, or the printed page in the booklet the meaning of the passage may once more be suggested. Another reading, also, of the Child Version may be given. After this, another group recital without a look at the passage. Then here and there a child is ready to recite alone.

It is well in most instances to delay the single recital until a following session. There are children whose memories are not as quick as those of others, although they are mentally normal children. Again there are children actually slow in their mental activities. These children we must not discourage; neither should we flatter the brighter children too much. Only for the sake of stimulating individual effort may there be any individual recitals.

Re-membling. The aim of Scripture memory work is that use of these passages shall be made sooner or later. But there can be no re-membling unless first there is a membering. The passage must be lodged in the child's mind as part and parcel of its being. Hence the nature of the selection ought to be understood, whether it be praise, prayer, warning, promise, or purely instruction. What phase of life does a certain passage fit? To what situation can the pupil apply it? Every passage needs to be put in the

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balance with these thoughts in mind, and be taught only in case the teacher sees its purpose.

Certain passages may and should be employed later on in the devotions of school or group, and not a few are suitable for private use. Teachers need to assist in their classes the plans of the platform leader by referring to the selections mastered and by encouraging work at home.

It is quite in agreement with the principles of religious pedagogy that a reward should be given to the two or three pupils who master the greatest number of passages. In the conditioning of such awards there should be attention paid to more than the mechanical memorizing. The manner of delivery reveals the pupil's taste of the real meaning; a translation of the passage in the pupil's own words written out and handed in under the leader's eye serves the same end. Most of all the judges should consider in how far the pupil has practiced the teachings of the passage in his own life.

SECTION I

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORKS

GOD THE CREATOR

Genesis 1:1-5

ONE of our very first questions when we started to think about things, was where everything we see around us came from. There is the green grass; there are the fresh-looking trees; there are the birds hopping and singing in their branches. The water is flowing; the raindrops come down from above. We see the mantle of snow in winter. How did all these things come to be? Here is the earth underneath us. Some people have dug into it many hundreds of feet but they have never dug clear through it to the other side. It is doubtful if that can ever be done, for that would mean at least seventy-five hundred miles of digging; or as long a distance as one would have to travel from San Francisco to New York and on away beyond on the Atlantic Ocean.

People who did not have the Bible have told many different stories about the making of the world; but they were only guessing. Even the ideas of some of the wisest men who had never read God's word, sound ridiculous to us. The

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Greeks believed that Light and Day, the children of Darkness and Night, created earth, sea and sky, all of them living persons. The Norsemen told of a gap between cold North and fiery South. Icy waters pouring into the gap were heated by southern fires, grew into a giant and became our earth. There is no satisfactory answer to our questions about how these things came to be, except in our Bible. It would be interesting to read the first chapter of Genesis from the first through the twenty-fifth verse, for it tells us so many things about God's work at the beginning of the world. But the first five verses are so often repeated in some form or another, that we can do no better than to learn them by memory; then we shall have that answer ready all through life.

Child Version: "In the beginning, we do not know how long ago, God created the world. The earth was not shaped as it is now; it was just a mass of rock and mud and water. No sunshine reached it; no moon or stars shone upon it, so that there was deep darkness all over the earth. No land could be seen; it seemed all water. But the Spirit of God, who is everywhere, was also present with this formless earth.

When the right time for it had come, God said: 'Let there be light.' And God let it be light for awhile and dark for awhile as the earth was turning around."

MADE IN GOD'S LIKENESS

Genesis 1:26-28, 31

If we are naturally curious to know how everything else came to be, there is one thing still more interesting, and that is, where we ourselves came from. We know that we have fathers and mothers, and that they have fathers and mothers, and that those grandparents of ours had their own grandparents. And we might go back still farther until our minds are confused; so we feel that somewhere there must be a stop. But how did the first man and woman get into the world? That's quite a question, isn't it?

We are not the only ones that have asked that question. Everybody who has begun to think about things has been wondering just as we have wondered. People in other lands to-day, and people of many centuries back, have been asking and asking, and some have tried to give the answer. Almost without exception, those wise men who thought very much about it, have felt that the first giver of life was not a mere man or a woman, but someone much more powerful and greater,—some great spirit.

But no story that ever was told about how man came into the world rings so true and is so dignified as the one we find in the first chapter of Genesis, from the twenty-sixth through the

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twenty-eighth verses. These verses tell us who is our first Father, and to whom we are most like if we would live true lives. They show how God gave us mental and spiritual powers, of the same kind with His own and far superior to the animals which He created. If you will memorize these verses, and also read the seventh verse of the second chapter, you will have some clear knowledge on that subject. And, by the way, in the Gospel of Luke, third chapter, the last verse, you may find that the relation of our first father here on earth to our Father in heaven is very much like that of ourselves to our father and mother. The last verse of the first chapter we want to learn, because it tells us that everything was good the way God made it.

Child Version: "And God said: 'Let us also make man, who can think and feel and will like ourselves. Let him be master in the earth over the creatures we have given life.' So God created man in his likeness, to know, to feel, and to act, like himself. He made both man and woman, and God blessed them and said to them: 'I bless thee and thy children after thee; let there be many of you. Be master over the earth and over the creatures I have placed upon the earth; eat and drink as you have need; it is all yours . . .' And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

THE GOD OF EARTH AND HEAVEN

Psalm 24:1-4

All through the years and centuries since the world was created people have wondered not only how things came into existence and how they themselves had their origin, but they have wondered, too, how everything was held together. They had never gone clear around the earth, so they naturally thought that the earth was flat. Then they began to calculate what was under the earth to keep it up. The ground we walk on has other ground under it, or maybe rock or water. But what is under that? And if there is anything under that, on what does it, in turn, rest? So, you see, those questions were very much like the questions about our father's fathers away back, and nobody could give an answer that seemed worth while.

There were several different stories about it among people who did not have God's word. One of them was that the earth rested on the shoulders of a mighty giant, whose name was Atlas. For that reason we still call the book with maps of the world in it, an atlas. But on what did the giant stand? Another story had it that the earth rested on the back of a large elephant, which stood on the back of a tortoise. Had you asked on what the tortoise rested you

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would probably have been told to run off and not ask such embarrassing questions.

To the Israelites who believed in God the knowledge was very clear that the earth and all the worlds are upheld by the hand of God. Some of their noblest hymns were sung in praise of God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The twenty-fourth Psalm is one of these. So noble are the thoughts of the opening verse of it that Prince Albert, a king of Great Britain, had it put up as a motto to be seen by all who visited the World's Fair in London in 1851.

The words of this Psalm are so clear and strong that we can learn them by heart without hearing a simpler wording of them.

THE KING OF GLORY

Psalm 24:7-10

Would it be possible for anyone to make something great unless he himself were great? This is just as true of the world and its Maker. If there are beauties in nature, He who made nature must be even more beautiful. If there are untold powers in creation, the Creator must be omnipotent. If times and seasons, planets and stars and all the things of the universe tell of a plan that is infinite, then He who controls all these must be infinitely wise. In short, the work of God's hands points to God as so great and full of glory that our minds can not think clearly

about His work and His plans. The best we can do is to learn about it, to praise Him in prayer and song, and so to live that He will be pleased with us.

The singers in Israel felt that way, too. For that reason, the latter part of the twenty-fourth Psalm is a series of shouts of admiration to Jehovah God. They sang those shouts of praise in choruses that responded each to the other. Hundreds of men would sing together the question: "Who is the King of Glory?" after which another company would lift up their voices and reply: "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Again another company, or possibly all in unison would sing: "Lift up your heads, etc.," to be responded to by the repetition of the question: "Who is this King of Glory?"

You may imagine that such singing was very impressive. We are sometimes inclined to think that we have advanced far over the ancient ways; but it is doubtful whether to-day we have any such majestic choruses as those of Israel. Together with the male voices the players were present with their harps and flutes and trumpets to take part in their proper turns.

In connection with this Psalm, the hymn of questioning "Who is on the Lord's side?" might be thoroughly mastered, taking a period for it.

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Our last Sunday's memory work was a song that contained responses. Our little company would not seem very important to people who had heard the thousands of Israel's chorus sing; but I am sure we can do something similar. We might have our responses between the boys and the girls or between one side of the room and the other.

Fortunately we have a song that is quite similar in some ways to the twenty-fourth Psalm. It begins with the question: "Who is on the Lord's side; Who will serve the King?" Then there are other questions, that follow in pairs, until we reach the chorus, in which the answer is given to all these questions. The best way to sing this fine song is therefore to have one set of us sing one pair of verses that form a question; and another set of us sing another pair. Then we can all in full force unite in the chorus.

But we can never sing it so heartily as when we have it by heart. Let us learn the first and the third stanzas.

You may enjoy this hymn still better if you know something of the person who wrote it. Miss Frances Havergal is the author. She was born in 1836 in Worcester, England, where her father was a minister. Her health was never robust; but she managed to do many fine things, especially along religious lines. When she was scarcely eight she had memorized all the Scrip-

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORKS 27

ture passages we are learning, and a good many more. Besides the song we are now practicing, she wrote such famous ones as: "Take my life and let it be, Consecrated, Lord, to Thee"; "Truehearted, wholehearted, faithful and loyal"; "I gave my life for thee," and others like them. All these songs, you notice, speak of the loyalty we owe our God and Saviour because He is so gracious to us.

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORKS

Psalm 19:1-6

Of all the numerous Psalms through which His people have sung Jehovah's praises, none is more familiar and more loved both by young people and by older ones than is the nineteenth Psalm. I cannot help thinking that the reason every age enjoys this Psalm is because the one who wrote it enjoyed it himself throughout his life. When David was a boy about the age of us Juniors and was herding his father's sheep, he must have been lying on his back many an evening as the twilight began to fall and been looking up at the limitless sky. One after another the stars began to wink at him, just as they do at us, and he knew they were saying to him: "David, don't you think it is about time to take the sheep home now?" And David, who had no watch in his pocket, felt naturally thankful when

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the stars made suggestions like that, for after the day's running he felt pretty tired. But he was truly fascinated as he looked up at the sky and saw those stars peeping at him, and he never forgot them. When he grew big enough to write and to use words that could express his thoughts better, one of the first things he did was to write this Psalm, you may be sure of that.

When we were little children, you remember, we learned the verse:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star;
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky."

And some of us have been wondering ever since. There are so many of them and they are so big that even the wisest of astronomers can tell us but little about them. But there are some things those stars tell us frankly, and one of those open secrets is that God made them. Psalm nineteen, verses one to six, are surely worth the learning.

Child Version: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky shows His wondrous works. Every day tells about Him and every night teaches us. The planets do not talk and the moon is silent; but we see them making their rounds through the skies, and so they tell of God wherever they go.

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORKS 29

“Among these lights the sun is greatest. It rises in the morning like a bridegroom stepping out of his house; and it is as happy as a young man ready for a race. Its course is from the east to the west, all the way through, and its heat reaches everywhere.”

SECTION II

GOD'S WONDERFUL TEACHING

FROM NATURE TO GOD

Psalms 19:7-10

THE world God made is wonderful, and it is a splendid thing for us to look at the things around us often and to learn about them. Even some of us grown people say every once in a while:

“The world is so full of a number of things,
I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings.”

But there is something much more wonderful still than anything we can ever see around us, and that is our own inner selves. After God had made everything else, you remember, He made man. From the time He started to make things, He worked upward all the while. First He made the seas and the earth and sky; then things that could live in the seas and on the earth and in the sky, and then, when all these had been finished, He made man, as the greatest work of His creation.

When our first parents had received life God

assured them that everything on earth belonged to the human race, and He commanded them to use all these good things to the best advantage. But they themselves must never forget that God gave them all these good things and that both these gifts and they themselves belonged to God. Their greatest wish in life should therefore be to please God. In fact, it has proven ever since, that people who have tried to enjoy God's gifts without being willing to live for Him have become slaves of the things they gathered to themselves and have become unable to enjoy them. Their hearts must be right with God, and they must treat others in the right way, or else everything begins to look wrong in the world.

It was quite natural for David, when he had sung so beautifully about the glories of creation, that he should think of the law of God, because in that law God said what He wants us to do.

Put into our words, this is what David said about the law of God: "The teachings of the Lord are perfect; they bring us back to Him. The Word of God is sure; it gives us wisdom to live by, no matter how little we know. The rules God makes are right; they make us glad. The commands of God are pure; they show us what is good. Reverence before God keeps our heart clean, and it lasts. His punishments are fair and altogether righteous.

"The teachings of God are worth more than

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money; they are pleasanter than the sweets we like so well. They help me to keep out of mischief and they make me happy when I follow them out."

Let us learn the exact language.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS—WORSHIP GOD ONLY

Exodus 20:1-6

There is within every one of us a feeling that some things we think or do are right and others wrong. This feeling has partly grown upon us, because the people with whom we have lived, our parents, our brothers and sisters and those with whom we have gone to school and played, have all found fault with us for doing certain things and have been pleased when we did other things. For instance, when we took things to ourselves that did not belong to us, those to whom they did belong were ready to tell us that we should keep our hands off. Again, when we spoke bitter words; or broke things, there was almost sure to be somebody who told us we did not do right. In that way we began to feel uneasy at doing the things that had been forbidden or disapproved.

But that is not the only reason why we have this sense of right and wrong. Apart from anything that others may say to us, there is within ourselves a voice that says: "You are doing

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS 33

wrong now"; or "Now you are doing the right thing." This voice is called "conscience." God created that inner voice when He made man, in order that every one might be properly warned when he is about to do wrong; and might feel happy at doing right.

But though the conscience does this marvellous service to us, its voice may not always be clear. Other people may have told us that we were right when we were wrong; or that we were wrong when we really did the will of God. Or we may have tried to silence this voice within us. By all these abuses the conscience gets confused and may not be heard clearly after a while. Not seldom people have followed their own wishes so often instead of the conscience that conscience does not speak any more; and they take their wishes for their conscience.

In order that right and wrong might forever remain clear to us God gave the Ten Commandments. Though given so long ago, they are still the law of life for everybody; and the laws of our country are based upon them.

The meaning of the Ten Commandments is expressed in these words:

God said to his people: I am giving thee life and am keeping thee every moment; therefore:

1. Worship me only.
2. Turn not your hearts on other things in such a way that you neglect to serve and honour

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me. To do so will bring upon you and upon your children and even upon your children's children terrible punishments. But if you love and serve me my blessings shall continue with you and with your children and with their children's children through all the ages as long as they remain faithful.

3. Be reverent in the use of my name and in talking of things and persons through which I especially show my power and glory. Without reverence you can not come to me in prayer.

4. Spend one whole day in seven with me. On that day you shall worship me with the rest of my people and study my word together. Do not on that sacred day finish up odds and ends that were left undone during the week. Keep free from weekday work and studies. Think of me and of my gracious plans for you and for all the world, just as I think especially of you on that day.

5. Love and obey your father and your mother; for in your home they take my place. You will be happier and live longer if you are obedient to them and always frank with them.

6. Be as kind to others as you like others to be to you.

7. Cast out the thought of secret sins. Keep pure in mind and body and help others in the same way.

8. Learn to earn money for things you do,

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS 35

but never charge for more than you earn, and never keep or take what does not belong to you.

9. Be frank to confess when you are in the wrong. Be sure you are right in talking about others, and if you have nothing good to say, keep still.

10. By diligence try to have some things all your own. When others have possession of things you would like to have, let them enjoy such things in peace. God will supply your needs if you are diligent and careful. But keep from fretting for more than you now need; and give to the Lord's work from what you receive. Greed and stinginess are a curse; economy and benevolence are a blessing.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS—OUR RELATION TO GOD AND TO PARENTS

Exodus 20:7-12

Every one of us has to find out what we have to do with God and what with the people around us. Our relation to God comes first; for He made us and we belong to Him; but our relation to others is a big thing in life, too. It is an excellent practice to attend Church and Sunday school; to read and study the Bible and to pray; but it is not enough. God wants us to show our religion in our living with others, too. On the other hand, it is not enough to be

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nice to people; to give away things and keep good-natured all the time; though that is all fine. God wants us to think of Him and seek His honour in all we think and do; and He alone has an absolute right to be our Lord. Besides, if we do not live true to Him, we are bound to be unjust with ourselves and some time or another we become a disappointment to others who trusted in us.

You must have noticed in learning the first part of the law that God claimed the right to the worship of Israel because He had brought them out of Egypt. In other words, He had been kind to them, and in return He looked for a token of thankfulness to Him. But they could never show their gratitude to God better than by doing His will.

This same reason is just as true to-day as it was three thousand years ago. God is good to us, and we can best show our thankfulness to Him by living as He would have us live. In the end this proves the best thing for ourselves; for His law is a law of health. The better we follow it out, the better we feel.

Zinzendorf, a rich nobleman, who had done little to show his thankfulness to God, saw in a hotel room a picture of Jesus on the cross, with the words: "This I did for thee; what doest thou for me?" From that moment he devoted his whole life to God's service.

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS—OUR RELATION TO OTHERS

Exodus 20:13-17

When Moses had been with God for forty days on Mount Sinai, he came down with two tablets of stone, on each one of which God had written a part of the Ten Commandments. It is not told us anywhere in the Bible just how the Ten Commandments were divided; but as we look at them now we may notice the two parts rather distinctly. The first four commandments tell us of our relation to God; we shall worship Him alone; not through images but as a Spirit; we shall honour His name and keep His Sabbath. The next six tell us of our relations among each other; first in regard to our parents, because they do stand next to God in their lives, and then in regard to all others.

So much does God think of our parents that He gives those who honour their father and mother the promise of a long and happy life.

The short-worded commandments that follow mean much more than may seem at first. For instance, Jesus tells us that one who has never actually killed another person but simply hates some person, is a murderer; and one who thinks vile thoughts is breaking the seventh commandment. The same holds true of all the rest. Even

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if we do not really speak a lie in so many words we do lie just the same by trying to give a false impression.

To learn these Ten Commandments by memory is not so very hard a task, since we have heard them over and over at various occasions. But without them, no matter how much we may learn in life, we shall never be truly educated or cultured.

THE HAPPY WAY

Psalm 1:1-3

With the Ten Commandments so freshly in mind we naturally look upon the people around us as divided into two classes: those who follow the will of God and those who do not. The more important thing, however, we must not forget, and that is to take ourselves into the counting. If we endeavour to please our Saviour we belong to one division; if we do not particularly concern ourselves about it we belong to the other.

The very first song in the book of Psalms presents these two kinds of people and calls them the godly and the ungodly. They are compared to trees, such as you have seen: scrubby, good-for-nothing ones, and big, healthy ones. In case they are fruit trees, the healthy kind bears

luscious fruit; while the dead-limbed, crooked ones either have no fruit on them, or very poor stuff to eat. Just as there are crooked trees, so there are crooked people; and as there are tall and comely trees so there are splendid people. The difference, though, does not lie in their faces and their physique so much as in their character. Those whose lives are in touch with God are getting the supply they need to live, and therefore they can bring forth abundant fruit. A man, or a boy, or a girl like that is truly "blessed."

Suppose we notice as we memorize these verses in what way the ungodly man gets deeper into the bad. First he simply listens when bad companions talk to him—he is walking in their counsel. Then he goes along a ways with them; perhaps thinking he can go back any time he wants to. But he does not go back. The next thing he is sitting down with them and is casting slurs on people that are ever so much better than he,—he is in the seat of the scornful.

So you see how very much like to-day were those times in which our Psalms were written, and the people that lived then like people of to-day.

Child Version: "Happy is the child that listens not to evil suggestions, seeks no bad companions and does not mock at any one or anything that pleases God, but is glad to obey God and his

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parents and always seeks to know what God wants him to do.

"Such a child is like a healthy tree that has plenty of water to grow. He keeps out of trouble and is successful in the right things he tries to do.

"With disobedient children it is altogether different. The evil which they do is worth no more than the ashes we throw out on a heap. Therefore, when God asks them what they are doing, they have to hang their heads in shame. After awhile other children who love God and please their parents, avoid them. For God is always present, to help His obedient children; but those who disobey Him have no end of trouble."

THE HAPPY WAY—*Continued*

Psalms 1:4-6

Before the days of threshing machines our fathers had quite a time to get the grain out of the straw and to separate it from the shell by which it had been protected during its growth. They really deserve much credit for the ingenious ways in which they managed to get it fairly well done. They would make their horses or their cattle walk on the sheaves of grain, that lay spread out on the threshing-floor until the rye, or wheat, or barley, or whatever it happened to be, was rubbed off from the stems,

and the little pocket in which it had grown was quite loosened.

The next step would be to get rid of that chaff; for nobody had any use for it, any more than we have for our ashes. The grain had been raised in order to get the seed and the food; but chaff is neither seed nor food. The question was how to dispose of it. By tossing a whole shovel full of grain and chaff together away up in the air, the wind got under the chaff while the heavier grain fell down into the shovel because it was heavier. The farther away the chaff blew and the quicker it was removed the better it pleased the farmer.

In this latter part of the psalm the ungodly are compared to the chaff. God's purpose in making man is that we should do His will; precisely as the farmer's purpose in sowing, cultivating and harvesting is to produce grain. Those who go contrary to His will are even less pleasing to Him than the chaff is to the farmer. Sooner or later the same thing that happened to the chaff will happen to the ungodly; they will be cast-aways. For the world and all the creatures belong to God, and can live out their true purpose only by serving Him.

It is well for us at the close of each day to ask ourselves how much of what we said and did and thought and read was chaff, and how much was like good grain.

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HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

Proverbs 3:1-6

It has been written of one boy in particular that he "grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and with men." That boy never was and never wanted to be out of God's immediate presence, for as most of you know, it was Jesus.

But what was true of Him may be true of any boy or girl that is willing to find out what God wants of him or her and then goes at it to carry out His pleasure personally, at home and among others. If we are truthful and fair in our dealings; if we are considerate of the feelings of others and show respect for older people; if we are willing to do the day's work even when it is not exactly our choice; if we take care not to talk and act as if we knew everything and the rest knew nothing; why, people simply can't help liking us. We are bound to grow in favour with men.

You will discover that it is worth while to have the favour of good men. You see, in case we have our plans laid out for the uplift of others we need the help of good men. Alone we cannot accomplish much. But there is just one thing that is worth still more than men's favour and that is the favour of God. There is

no reason why we should not have it, unless we are working against His plans. The surest fact in all the world is the favour of God upon one who tries to please Him. And the mightiest force in the world is the favour of God; for His plans carry through in the end, no matter how enemies may oppose them.

This entire book of Proverbs is a selection of the choicest declarations of wise and good men, which really no youth can afford to miss reading. It is all so practical and taken right from life. It would be splendid to sit down and read it from start to finish. And the passage we suggest is among the finest.

Child Version: God says to us, "My boys and girls, remember what I shall tell you; for if you do, you will live long and happy lives. Be kind to others and others will be kinder to you. Tell the truth even if it hurts, for in the end it will make you happier. Make this a rule of your life which you shall never break, no matter what happens. As sure as you practice these two things, kindness and truth, people will like you; they will understand better when you try to do right, and God will bless you."

"Remember this, too," God says, "When you are planning to do something worth while, ask God to give you wisdom in the planning and help in the work. You can trust Him completely. What-

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ever you do, turn to God for His help and advice by praying to Him and by reading the Bible, and He will show you the right things to do."

SEE GOD EVERYWHERE

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

One great reason why many people are not helping the world along more than they do is because they do not know how. Suppose we should be asked to construct a church-bell! It would be impossible for us to produce a decent article or anything whatever in the bell line, because we have never learned to smelt the metals; how to mix them, or how to cast them. Matters are not unlike this in our every-day life. So many things occur to us; we meet so many different people; the circumstances under which we are called upon to act are so varied, the decisions we must form are so frequently unlooked for, that we stand constantly in need of all the thinking powers we possess, plus all the good information we have secured, plus all we may still be able to learn.

The things which God has revealed in His holy Word are His lessons to us, which we should master in order to live as nobly as it is possible for us to live. Not merely the Ten Commandments which we memorized some time ago; but the experiences of the men and women of

God of whom we are told in this Book and the splendid sayings they have left to the world, all these are a legacy to us who are called to live worth-while lives to-day. The less we know of all this, the poorer our lives must be; and the more we know of it, the richer we find ourselves.

At the close of Moses' life, just before he went up into mount Nebo to be buried there by the hand of God, he taught the children of Israel a series of life-lessons, which he had gathered from his rich experience. The words we learn at this time form a special introduction to such a lesson; but they apply to every teaching of God as well.

Child Version: "Hear, O Israel, there is only one God and He is our God. And because He loves us, He wants us to love Him so greatly that we would rather suffer and lose everything than displease Him. And the lesson He has taught us in the Bible He wants us to remember and to teach to others. We should talk about them when we are at home and when we walk together; we should think of them when we study, when we work and when we play. God wants our minds and our hearts, our eyes and our ears, our hands and our feet, our time and our money, our whole body and our whole soul, to serve Him and to be His own, because He

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'made us and keeps us and will finally have us with Himself in glory.'

REMEMBER THY CREATOR

Ecclesiastes 12:1-4, 13, 14

The most tragic thing about a barbarian is that he lives every day as if there were no to-morrow; he slides through the summer as if no winter were ever to arrive; he feasts on his plenty as if want could never knock at his hut again. But the same principle may be true in the case of every one of us. The boy or the girl who acts and lives as if the grown-up time were never to come is as foolish as the most thoughtless barbarian; because if we are to live at all, such a time is bound to come.

Imagine a farmer who in the springtime should say: "Well, I don't believe it is worth while to spend my time and my money putting seeds and plants in the ground. I'll get along somehow if I just let things go for the present." What a sorry figure such a man must cut at the time other farmers are gathering their crops. He may be having an easy time of it, to be sure, but after a while he would be compelled to hire out to others, work harder than ever before and earn less.

Boys and girls are in the springtime of life when things must be planted if they are to grow

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a harvest. That's the reason the younger folks attend school, while the older folks are working in the office, and factory and out in the field. If the things we learn are good, they will grow in us and some day bring good returns. Not seldom it seems so much more attractive to play than to study; or we want to make money at once. But in the end the one who has studied most faithfully has the advantage.

Since God is the greatest of all beings, it is most worth while to learn all we can about Him. Above all, we can never safely forget that He is our Creator. If we regard our bodies as His, we are bound to keep them pure. The same is true of our minds. When at last we have grown old, we can then look back on a useful, honourable life, and feel prepared to meet our Maker face to face.

Child Version: "Remember your Creator while you are young; for if you do not care for Him now your heart will grow harder and harder, until you do not like to hear about God's goodness and friendship at all.

"Remember God while you enjoy living—while your eyes are keen to see His beautiful creation and your ears perfect to hear what God has to say; while your mind is clear to remember His teachings, your heart strong to be happy in Him and your voice pleasant to praise Him.

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“Remember the Lord while your lips are ready to tell the truth and your legs are straight and active to run for Him; while you are young enough to chew thoroughly what you eat, and to see clearly when dangers are in the way.

“Remember your Maker while you can serve Him, so that when you get sick or old you will not be sorry for the way in which you lived while you were young and strong . . .

“Let us hear how we may please God. He wants us to love and serve Him above all, and our neighbour as ourselves, and that is all that He expects of us.

“Remember that everything we do, no matter how little others know about it, is known to God. If it is good, He will bless us; if it is evil, there is punishment sure to follow.”

SECTION III

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

GOD'S GREAT GIFTS

Psalm 103:1-5

NOT everybody who receives good things remembers the gifts and the giver. I am almost positive that if we should sit down for a few minutes, say at Thanksgiving, and quietly try to think out what enjoyments and blessings have come to us through the kindness of others, one thing after another would slowly come up in our minds until at last we would exclaim: "My, I had no idea there were so many. I had completely forgotten about that one and that one." On the other hand, we have at times felt quite discouraged because others whom we tried to help have utterly neglected to show us the least bit of gratitude. They forgot what we did for them.

In the life of David the favours of God were very many. He started as a shepherd boy and finished as the greatest king Israel ever had. It was not all smooth sailing. He had to struggle

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hard and long; but God's hand was with him. So, when he had gained the throne he took time to sit down one day in order to count his blessings. It is not probable that he remembered them all; but in reading over this Psalm you will notice that a good many occurred to him.

In the first five verses which we have for to-day, practically every experience of life is mentioned, as far as God's care for us is concerned: God's forgiveness of our sins; His care over us in sickness; His daily supply of our needs; in short all the good gifts He constantly showers upon those who trust in Him. For God does not change. What He did for David He is just as ready to do for us.

The most beautiful part of it all is, that instead of asking the Lord to give him still more, David takes time to say "Thank you."

Child Version: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let me praise Him with my whole heart. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let me never forget what God is doing for me. He forgives my sins, when I am sorry for them; He gives me health again when I have fallen sick; He takes care of me in danger every moment; He shows me so much kindness and love, I can not tell all of it. He gives me food and drink; He makes me glad. I am as happy as a little laughing child; for God is good to me; and I

feel so strong; I believe I could do anything He wants me to do."

In connection with this passage, the familiar song entitled, "Count Your Blessings," might be taught so that the children can sing it without books.

GOD'S GREAT GOODNESS

Psalm 103:10-14

While it is very impressive for us to think of the Lord as our Shepherd, because a true shepherd is so sure to take care of his own sheep, it is still more impressive to think of Him as our Father. You will see at once that a father is closer to his children and has more concern about them than a shepherd has toward his sheep, when you think of the difference it would make whether a shepherd should lose a sheep, or whether he should lose a child.

In one of the very first passages which we learned was the thought of God as our Father; for it said that we are made after His likeness, and that our first parents came from Him. This fact burst upon David's mind as he began to count up the good gifts of God and the constant kindnesses which the Lord had seen fit to show him. It dawned upon him that God was no less than a father to him. Once he had started to think

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along these lines and it grew clearer and clearer. God had understood him, when people around him did not; God had forgiven him, when people were still counting his errors against him; God had shown love and sympathy at times when everybody seemed turned against him. "That's like a father," said David, and he was right.

If ever we have taken time to think about it, we have come to exactly the same conclusion. So often when we really tried to be fair and helpful, our very friends have suspected us of selfishness; and at times when we felt sad, they thought we were stuck up. They did not understand us; but God always does.

Jesus taught us the prayer to our Father in heaven; but a thousand years previously David had learned to think of God in this intimate way. Some time when we use The Lord's Prayer, let us call to mind this part of the 103rd Psalm.

Child Version: "God has not punished us as we deserved; He has not made us suffer as greatly as we might because of our sins. The stars are so high up in the sky, we could never climb such a distance; but God's love for us is as big as the sky. You can never reach the East from the West, because the East is always one way and the West the other way; but God puts our sins as far away as that when He forgives us. Just as a father feels sorry for his children

when they are in trouble, and help them, so does God care for us and help us. He knows exactly how weak we are and how much we can stand. He remembers how greatly we need Him."

OUR GOOD SHEPHERD

Psalm 23.

To the psalm-singing people in this country and elsewhere there are many psalms just as precious as the Twenty-third; but to us who use only a few psalms in our worship this one is doubtless more generally loved than any other. One reason why we love it so well is that we have sung it; but before anybody sang it there surely was a reason why this psalm almost alone appealed so strongly to us all that we wanted to sing it.

If several of us should be asked why we like the Twenty-third Psalm, every one might have a different answer. One reason, however, would lie at the bottom with every one of us and that is that God is here spoken of as the Shepherd. That one clause at the opening: "The Lord is my Shepherd," includes all the rest. He will take care of us; He will help us at every moment of our lives. Through dangerous and dark places, if we must go through them, He keeps right beside us. If some one else tries to hurt us, He is there to protect us. And when we have foolishly wandered away from Him and have

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gotten ourselves into all kinds of trouble He does not deal harshly with us. He may have to punish us some way, so that we shall learn to do better; but He helps us along out of the trouble, just the same.

The best of it all is just this, that He is always there. That was the promise Jesus made, you know: "Lo, I am with you always."

This Good Shepherd is Jesus Christ; and so greatly did He love us that He gave His life to save us. And His love is just the same to-day.

If you know any old people, that are real Christians, will you ask them to tell you frankly whether the good Shepherd ever failed them?

Child Version: "The Lord takes care of me. I have everything. He gives me food, clothing, shelter, and all else I need. He brings me back when I have gone wrong. He leads me in the right way, because He loves me. Even in sickness and in death I shall not be afraid, for Thou are with me, O God; Thy strength and Thy help are a great comfort to me. No matter how others may misunderstand me and try to hurt me, I know, O Lord, that Thou dost understand me and encourage me. When I feel weak Thou givest me strength and more good things than I can use all at the same time.

"Surely goodness and love shall stay with me as long as I live."

A PRAYER FROM THE HEART

Psalm 19:11-14

To praise God's law for its perfect beauty and purity is one thing; but to judge our own lives by its lofty standards may prove quite another thing. It is comparatively easy to talk about being good and noble and kind and considerate to others in everything; but actually to live that way does not always go so easy. And yet, is not the living of these ideas really the most worth-while part of it?

During the days when Jesus lived upon earth there were large numbers of Jews who talked a good deal about religion and the law of God. They even wore excellent mottoes on their coats, so that everybody might notice how much they appreciated the noble words of ancient men; but when it came to living those fine suggestions, they did not care to do that. For that reason our Saviour, who certainly was gentle enough, called such people, straight to their faces, "hypocrites." And I am sure you agree that they deserved the name.

This nineteenth Psalm devotes its latter verses to an honest search into the heart. It started out by looking around to see the wonderful works of God in nature; then it took up the praise of His laws; but all that is not enough. The final question is, "How am I living the will of my

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Creator, and treating my fellows? Am I honouring God by the way I live? Is He pleased with me; or is He sorry for ever giving me life?"

Not seldom we have a pretty good idea of ourselves, even though other people see faults in us. Perhaps we fancy that everybody who does not pat us on the back is just mean; when actually we do and say things of which when we are older we shall be heartily ashamed. We do not "see ourselves as others see us." And it would not be good for us to be looking into our own heart all the time; for we should then forget to help others. But every now and then to take a square look at ourselves, and to pray God to show us our faults will prove very helpful indeed. Besides, when other people find fault with us, it is very likely that we might improve in our habits a little.

For such an understanding David prayed in words like these:

"O God, I do not understand myself. Help me against my sins of which I alone have knowledge.

"Keep me from pride and boasting; help me to overcome my desire for such foolishness. Then shall I be free from one of my greatest faults.

"Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be well pleasing in thy sight, O Lord, my help and my Saviour."

Shall we master these closing verses?

A PERSONAL PRAYER

Psalm 139:1-4, 23, 24

No shepherd would be true to his name if he were not concerned about his sheep and rather spent his time away from them than with them. Hired men might feel that way; but shepherds, who own the sheep, never do. There may be times even when some of the sheep would just as lief not have the shepherd around, so they could run anywhere they please and nobody could find them. But that would be as dangerous and bad for the sheep as anything possibly could be. There is always danger of ferocious dogs, even in our country; and at some places wolves prowl around at night and occasionally in the daytime. Just at the moment when the sheep is so far away from the shepherd that he cannot come to the rescue, the murderous wild beast springs upon his victim and kills it.

There are dangerous places, too, where the sheep is likely to get too close to the edge, and unless the shepherd throws a clod to make it jump sideways from the danger, death would be almost certain.

For these same reasons it is the greatest blessing we can think of to have God always near. He is everywhere and knows all about us. Even our purposes, which we have not told to any

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one, He knows as well as if we had been publishing them in the newspaper. But His aim in keeping so near us is not in order to see our faults; it is much more to help us. A shepherd does not enjoy looking at the mistakes his sheep continually make; that is only a necessary part of his dealing with the sheep; he is glad to give warning and to show the best places. Just so our Saviour is ever at hand to guide and strengthen us and to give us warning. There is no one in all the world like God, to know exactly how things are and how they will turn out; for He knows the thoughts and purposes of others, too. Nobody is quite so smart that he can deceive God. And nobody is quite so wise, but he does well to get advice from Jesus Christ.

Child Version: "O Lord, thou hast looked into my heart and thou knowest me. Whether I am resting or busy Thou seest me and Thou knowest what I am planning. Thou art with me when I walk and when I am asleep, and knowest all about everything I do. Even when the words I intend to say are still a secret, they are perfectly known to Thee.

"And I am glad everything is known to Thee, for others often misunderstand me. I pray Thee, O God, to show me whatever wrong I am doing or planning, and to lead me in the way that pleases Thee."

THE HOUSE OF WORSHIP

Psalm 84:1-3

From the earliest times the people that have loved and served the Lord have wanted to come together occasionally. This is quite natural, for as the proverb has it: "Birds of a feather flock together." One does not have to watch very long to discover that those who try to get along without God clique together, too.

The company or congregation of people who gather for worship are called a church. They usually meet in some building in order to be shielded from sun and rain. Such a building is not itself the church, but since the church regularly meets in such a building the name "church" is usually applied to the building as well.

During the years when the children of Israel were travelling through the desert it was, of course, impossible for them to meet in a solid structure, for they were moving all the time. But they nevertheless had a building. It was called a tabernacle. It consisted of walls that could be taken apart by boards; while the roof was made of skins, and the covering of costly cloth. As soon as the hosts of Israel broke camp, all these parts were carried along by the priests.

Finally, when the Israelites had entered

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Canaan they put up the tabernacle in one place, at Shiloh, where it remained for many years. Then the people became so wicked that God would not leave His tabernacle among them. But when they repented, God let it come back. Especially in David's time the services of worship at the tabernacle were full of joy and reverence.

The barn swallow and the sparrow could go freely in and out of God's house of worship; for it was a place of safety. They could build their nests there and watch over their young; while the people were offering their sacrifices. No wonder such a warrior as David enjoyed the perfect security of such a place.

When as boys we are tempted to throw stones at the birds, we do well to remember how well the Lord wishes to have them taken care of.

Child Version: "How beautiful is the house of worship! I like to be there. When I cannot go to church and Sabbath School I feel so very sorry, I don't know what to do; for I want to sing and pray to God and learn more about Him.

"Everybody is safe in God's house. We come together there, not to hurt, but to help each other in the praise of God. Of course, when we go home we throw no stones at birds; we hurt no little children; for we have learned to protect each other just as God protects us."

SAFE AND PLEASANT PLACE 61

A SAFE AND PLEASANT PLACE

Psalm 84:9-12

You may be sure that such a famous and talented man as David was, could find a hearty welcome wherever he went. Besides the fact that he was the king of the country, there were so many things he could do better than anyone else. He was what may be called a genius. He could play on the harp better than anybody for miles and miles around. He could throw a stone more accurately than the other boys. By and by he learned to write poetry, and he did that better than others. Perhaps in his earlier days he did not write so well; for he had to learn by practice just like the rest of us, and his poor work has naturally been lost. Then, when it came to downright fighting, David again was right there, the bravest of the brave and the leader of Israel's heroes. He certainly was a man, every inch of him.

There was just one place, though, which David enjoyed better than a thousand other places. That was the church. You know why? Well, first, because he was a wise man and knew, therefore, that the church is a good place to be. When people realize that they are not perfect, they feel the need of sympathy and of God's

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help, and though the Lord is able and willing to give these blessings at home, His special promises are in favour of the church, where several of His children come together. Then, I am quite sure, David enjoyed church attendance immensely because he took an active part in it. When a person just sits there, without uniting in the singing, or in the prayers, and does not pay much attention to the preaching, it is no wonder he does not get much out of it.

There is still another reason why David liked the church. Everywhere else he was the king; but in church he was a worshipper of God just the same as all the rest. He needed strength and forgiveness. In church everybody is on a level because we all need God's help, no matter how great or how small we are.

Child Version: "O God, Who art always present to help us, look upon us in love, for we are Thy children. One day in Thy house is better than a thousand days anywhere else where we learn wicked things. I would rather be janitor in the church, doing what God wants me to do, than the richest man in the finest house, sinning against God. Because God is so good to us; He gives us sunshine and happiness; He keeps us when we are in danger. He will be kind to us as long as we live and will keep us honourable

SAFE AND PLEASANT PLACE 63

when we do His will. He will give us every blessing we can think of, if in our thoughts and words and actions we please Him.

“O Lord of earth and heaven, those who trust in Thee are truly happy.”

SECTION IV

GOD OUR SAVIOUR

GOD'S INVITATION TO US

Isaiah 55:1-3

OF all the Old Testament prophets Isaiah is generally considered the greatest; not because of the length of his writings, for both Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's prophecies are fully as long; but rather because of the tremendous force of his appeals and the profound insight in the meaning of God's ways with men. Even at this date, so many thousands of years since that man of God spoke his messages, one can still feel a quickening of the pulse at reading his searching sentences. How anyone could have listened to him when he spoke, without carrying away a lasting impression is strange indeed.

The chapter from which we are to memorize three portions is one of the prophet's masterpieces. It shows that Isaiah was intensely stirred by the foolish wanderings of his people. To-day we all know how senseless it is for persons to bow down to images which human hands have

made, expecting help from them; but that is what a large number of Israelites in Isaiah's day were actually doing. They were spending their money for that which was not bread and they laboured for that which did not satisfy. No wonder the prophet felt deeply grieved, for he knew that Jehovah was inviting His people all the while to blessings which He alone could give. And yet, those Israelites who left their God and turned to idols fancied that they were far in advance of Isaiah. In their eyes the one really wise man among them was merely a back-number.

Before we blame those Jews we had better make sure whether perhaps we are not doing similar things right now. Do we not frequently worry and fret about things that a few years or even weeks from now will look too insignificant to mention? Do we not prize certain things rather highly, that are of no permanent value? And are we not slow to get interested in the very best things that can ever be offered us?

Child Version: "Ho, every one who is thirsty! Come right here; there is plenty of water for you. And every one who is hungry but has no money, come here and eat all you want. You can eat and drink without money and without paying for it.

"Why do you spend money when you are

hungry, for things that do not feed you? And why do you work for things that will do you no good? Listen carefully to me. I can give you all you want and you will be happy over all the good things you receive. Turn away your ear from wicked advice. Come to me and you shall live. I promise you all the blessings of my children, and I am true to my promise."

GOD'S MERCIFUL WAYS

Isaiah 55:6-8

Did you know that among the almost countless promises of God there is not a single one to assure us that we can wait till to-morrow before we shall turn to Him? Without exception each time when mention is made of our hearing the call of God, it says, "to-day."

Since God is everywhere it might seem that He is as near to us at one time as at another; but in reality this is not the case. There are times when He is very near; while at other times He is farther away. The difference does not lie with God so much, though, as it lies with us. We feel drawn to Him at times very strongly; then He is near. This is the time to settle the whole matter with Him. There is no good in beating about the bush, when it comes to pledging our loyalty to God. We know that He made us; that by every right we belong to Him, and

that still He cares for us. But there is great danger of putting down this better feeling because we are afraid it may not afford us some pleasures we have been counting on.

This call of God to our hearts is very much like our conscience, only it is not felt as frequently. When we feel this drawing power that says: "Be honest with yourself and with your Saviour," and put it down, the result may be that such a voice will not again be heard for a great length of time; possibly never. Dallying means drifting; and drifting means moving away from the Saviour.

The passage we are learning makes it certain that God is willing to accept us as His own right now. No matter how ugly we have acted; how untrue we have been; how badly we have treated others; how little we have reckoned with Jehovah,—He is willing at once to forgive us, and for the love of Christ to look at us as if we had never done wrong. That sounds too good to be true, but His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

Child Version: "Seek the Lord while He is looking for you; pray to Him while He speaks to you. My call to you is for to-day; I am not speaking of to-morrow. Let the wicked turn from their evil ways, and let sinners quit their godless planning. Let them go back to the Lord,

and He will forgive them; let them come home to God and He will remember their sins no more; for God says, 'I do not think in such a small way as people usually do; nor do I act with bitterness as you have acted. I am full of love and mercy.' "

GOD'S MESSAGE AT WORK

Isaiah 55:9-11

Whenever the Lord speaks, something is coming to pass. Jehovah does not talk, as we may do occasionally, to fill in time or to hear His own words. He speaks because, if He kept silent, somebody must miss a great blessing; or incur avoidable trouble.

There are many times when God's speaking is like a train-signal. It gives warning that danger is near. The person who does not want to observe such a warning dashes right on to his ruin and may take others along with him.

There are other times when His speaking is like a weather signal. We must make out for ourselves whether we may justly look for things coming to us that we shall enjoy; or whether there is some kind of trouble in store, because of our previous actions. Again, His speaking is in every way like the cool wind that follows a very hot season. It assures us that a blessed rain is coming.

But in whatever way the voice of the Lord comes to us, it is worth our while to listen.

In the passage for to-day the word of God is actually likened to rain and snow that fall from heaven to the earth. Without the moisture which rain and snow supply to the earth, all the beautiful sunshine which we are so much more ready to praise than the rain and the snow, would be harmful instead of helpful. With sunshine alone the vegetation must burn to death.

The Word of God is as necessary for our lives as rain and snow are to the earth. Without divine advice how we shall use the pleasant things of life? They are bound to turn from blessings into harm.

When the Lord, therefore, has freely given us His advice for the right conduct of life, that word becomes our blessing when it serves to guide us; but God has to count it against us if we refuse to be led by it.

Child Version: "Just as rain and snow come down from the skies and do not go back there until they have watered the earth, so that grass could sprout and seeds could bud and grains grow everywhere to supply bread for the hungry and more seed for another crop, so are the lessons which I teach. They do not come back to Me without doing the work for which I gave them. My Word cannot safely be neglected;

it goes forth to tell of Me and I carry out my plans.

“The ways in which I plan and do things are as much above the ways in which you plan and do things as the heavens are above the earth.”

HE LIVED AND DIED FOR US

Isaiah 53:3-7

Almost as soon as people had sinned they began to try how they might make up for it; very much as when we have hurt somebody's feelings and wish to make friends again. There seemed to be only two ways open for those who felt really concerned about it: either they must inflict some severe punishment upon themselves or else they must give up something in their possession of which they thought a good deal and that therefore might prove pleasing to the one who had been offended. Even among people who have heard something about Jesus Christ there are still those who chastise themselves severely in order to atone for their sins; while sacrifices of some sort are offered in many heathen countries.

This shows that people have always felt the wrongness of sin and the existence of some one above them to whom they were responsible. But there was one thing people out of their own minds had not thought out, and which even to-

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day they are not thinking out: that God planned to send His own Son to atone for the sins of men. God's ways, you see, are higher than our ways. No man except the Son of God who became man, could do this for others, because all the rest of us could not even do it fully for ourselves.

Jehovah did not simply plan this, but He also told about it. In various ways and to many persons He spoke of it. As soon as man had sinned, God promised some one in the future who should crush the serpent's head. But while He did His redeeming work His own heel must be bruised, and that is very painful. At other times God spoke of the Redeemer as a victor and did not mention His suffering; but here in Isaiah it becomes very clear, that in order to take away the sins of the world the Son of God must suffer fearfully.

Child Version: "Our Saviour was despised and rejected by His own people. He suffered greatly and He knows what sorrow means. His friends left Him when they should most have shown their loyalty; and His people never believed His love for them while He was on earth. Surely He suffered for our sins and sorrowed because we have gone wrong, although His people thought that God punished Him. But He was wounded because we deserve to be wounded; He

was bruised because we disobey. Because He suffered, we can have peace with God; because He was beaten, therefore our sins may be forgiven. Like foolish sheep, we all have gone astray; we have turned in every direction away from God, who loves us. But Jesus Christ took all our sins upon Himself.

"They wounded Him sorely; they finally killed Him; but He never struck back. Just like a lamb that is killed and a sheep that is shorn, so our Saviour never opened His mouth when He was suffering for us."

THE PRINCE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

Isaiah 9:6, 7

When a prophet of the Most High brought a message of God to the people two important ideas controlled his mind: first, what was the people's present feeling toward God; did they love and obey Him? And second, what events were to be expected from the hand of God?

The first part of their work was therefore very similar to that of our ministers, which we call preaching. But the second part is but rarely if ever realized to-day. Occasionally a man of God may still enter so deeply into the thoughts of God that his message becomes a kind of prophecy; but in the true sense of foretelling we must think of the prophets of olden time.

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So completely did Isaiah become filled with the Spirit of God and so was he mastered by that Spirit, that he began to speak of things that were still to occur, as if they had already happened. This is the case in his prophecy of the birth of Christ; it is so real to him that he shouts out for joy and proclaims the Saviour's birth nine hundred years before it took place.

He goes farther. He observes the character of the God-man, so wonderful a counsellor that we may safely follow Him; so mighty that under His protection we are absolutely safe; so lasting that we need never fear that He will change; and such a friend of peace that with Him we shall find our needed rest.

This is exactly what Jesus proved to be. So marvellous a prophecy is this that no Christmas passes by without its being repeated.

Child Version: Isaiah said: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; he shall be the Ruler of the nations; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. His kingdom shall grow larger every day and its peace shall not be ended by wars. He shall be king over the people of God; he shall govern the nations with justice and righteousness for evermore.

“The Lord of heaven and earth has spoken and it shall come to pass.”

IN BETHLEHEM'S FIELDS

Luke 2:8-11

It was such a long time waiting before God's promises of a Redeemer of men were fulfilled that even of the few who remembered it only a part were still looking forward to it on the day when the Saviour was born. But God had given His word, and, as we learned, that comes to pass however unlikely it may appear. He was simply waiting for the right time.

There are two interesting stories given in connection with the birth of Christ, one in Matthew and one in Luke. The story in Matthew tells us of the coming of the Wise men from the East, as they were led by the Star of Bethlehem. They probably did not reach the Christ-child until a few weeks or months after it was born; for if you read that story, as I hope you will, you will notice that the Wise men did not return by the way of Jerusalem as king Herod wanted them to do; and that the cruel king ordered every boy-child in Bethlehem of two years old and under to be killed.

Our story in Luke tells of Jesus' birth and the announcement of it by the angels. Since we have read so often of God as our Shepherd it seems

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the most natural thing in the world that if God wished to tell of the birth of His Son to anybody, it should be to shepherds.

Let us keep in mind that these were the fields in which David had watched his father's sheep while he was a boy and grew into manhood. This was the town in which David had been born. Perhaps the old family homestead was still standing. It would be if it had been built out of the stones that are so plentiful around there. Mary and Joseph came to this town because they were descendants of David. Although they were in a humble condition of life, they had as royal blood coursing through their veins as anybody.

Christmas comes once every year of our lives, and if we master these memory verses now it will afford us pleasure at every Christmas occasion.

THE BABE IN THE MANGER

Luke 2:12-14

At the time when Mary and Joseph entered the little town of Bethlehem there were great crowds of people who, like themselves, had come to be registered. Cæsar Augustus, the Roman emperor, had sent out the order to everyone in his empire to be registered as his subject at the ancestral home. Had it not been for this command the natural birthplace of Jesus should

have been Nazareth, where his parents lived. But the prophecies had told of Bethlehem, the city of David, and God took care that His plan was carried out. Little did the emperor imagine that he was himself following out God's order when he gave orders to so many millions of subjects.

To the weary travellers as they reached Bethlehem it was doubtless a great disappointment to find every available room occupied. They lived so far away, and they had to travel so carefully, that many had preceded them. So, they had to be content with a place in the stable. It was about as clean there as it was in the houses those days, especially when so many people were huddled together, and you may be sure that if there was dirt around it was speedily removed by such a husband and wife. The manger is the cleanest spot of all; and some layers of hay and straw would serve to make a bed as comfortable as could have been secured in any inn. Besides, this place gave them the protection of seclusion.

But it was not home, as far as the place was concerned. Jesus was born away from home. It was home, though, and a splendid one as far as the parents were concerned. One could not wish for a finer home to enter than the presence of Mary and Joseph. They both loved God and were considerate of others. God did not

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mind to have His Son born humbly; but he took care to have Him placed in a godly home.

It seems that when Jesus left heaven, He left the gates ajar; for presently innumerable hosts of angels came out and sang songs of heaven. Earth and heaven were close together then, and that is what Jesus came for, to bring heaven to earth, and to lead earth to heaven.

THE CHRIST WHO MADE ALL THINGS

John 1:1-4

Whenever we write a letter we mention either at the beginning or at the close the date on which we are writing. The number of the year we thus mention depends on the length of time that has elapsed since Jesus was born. Perhaps you have sometimes noticed in print the letters A. D. preceding the figures of the year. Those letters stand for Anno Domini, which means, In the year of our Lord. In a similar way the letters B. C. are sometimes used, meaning, Before Christ.

From the passage we are memorizing to-day, you learn something more than that Jesus was born some nineteen hundred years ago; it tells us that He was living long before He came to the world. He was living at that time of which we learned in our very first passage when the worlds were not yet formed: In the beginning.

Here He is called "The Word," because it is through words that we usually express ourselves, and it was through Jesus Christ that God showed Himself to the world.

There is something more about our Lord Jesus. All things were made by Him. It was He who said: "Let there be light." It was He who separated land from water; who caused the earth to bring forth, and made the beasts of the field. It was He who formed man after His likeness.

As we look at the beauty of nature, the fields, the trees, the rivers, the mountains and the starry heavens, we may truly say to ourselves: "Jesus my Saviour and Friend made all these things. I can trust in Him, no matter what may happen."

Child Version: "In the beginning, before the worlds had been created, Christ the Son of God was with our heavenly Father, because He Himself was God. In the beginning the Son of God was with the Father. Then Christ made the world and everything that is in it. There was nothing made which He did not make. He lived, He gave life, and because He lived He gave light to all the world."

SECTION V

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:2-6

THE song of the angels in Bethlehem's fields told of peace on earth and goodwill among the people. To bring that about no change was necessary in conditions as they existed in heaven; but there must be some tremendous changes on earth. These changes were not to be outward first of all; but inward. The hearts of men must first be peaceful and benevolent, before peace and benevolence could rule on earth.

Jesus therefore at the beginning of His ministry made plain to His disciples that His kingdom was to be of the heart. Once the heart was turned to God and the rest must follow as the day the night. For it is practically impossible for a man who thinks wrong to act right; or for one who thinks right to go astray in his life. As Jesus Himself put it: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; nor an evil tree good fruit."

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The beatitudes have proven attractive to the followers of Christ because they are so truly Christian. Christ Himself actually was what in these sayings He wants us to be. Take all these sentences together and you have a portrait of a full-fledged Christian character. But there is one requirement without which we do not begin to understand these words: we must keep clearly in mind that the kingdom of God is first of all spiritual.

This does not mean that these principles which Christ here teaches should not be applied to our every day life, and even to the government of our cities, our States and the nation. Wicked politicians like to convince good Christian people that religion and politics do not mix. They are afraid that we who follow Christ shall insist that His principles shall be honoured by those in authority. The tendency of true Christianity is to become master of every concern of life and business. In that way Jesus shall be made king most truly.

Child Version: "Happy are they who feel the need of God's help; for God is in their hearts.

"Happy are they who regret their sins and shortcomings; for God will forgive their sins and comfort them.

"Happy are they who are willing to let others

have first place ; for God will take care that they shall have greatest power.

“Happy are they who earnestly pray and live for the right ; for God will fill them with His own righteousness.

“Happy are they who are kind and forgiving toward others ; for they have favour with God and with men.

“Happy are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God.

“Happy are the peacemakers ; for they shall be called the children of God.

“Happy are they who are troubled by others because they do right ; for God is in their hearts.

“Happy are you when others speak bitterly against you and trouble you and tell lies about you, because you serve Me.

“Be joyful and very glad ; for God’s favour is great for you. Whenever people have served God, they have suffered and have been blessed in this way.”

THE BEATITUDES—*Continued*

Matthew 5:7-10

Had one of us been asked to write out a list of the qualities we look for in our ideal man, I am quite sure we should have written something far different from these beatitudes. We do not

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fancy poverty; we don't enjoy mourning; we do not wish to be meek.

Well, let us look at the rest of these qualities first. We like to have others play fair, don't we? That's righteousness. And we don't feel attracted to people that carry a grudge! Then we believe in being merciful, at least when we talk of what others ought to be. We do not really think highly of boys and girls that have a dirty tongue. Then our best selves prefer purity. Quarrellers are the last persons we care to have anything to do with. So, we say: "Blessed are the peacemakers." When we see anyone stand up for his convictions, no matter how much it costs him, then we feel like shaking hands with him. There's where we join in with the "blessed for righteousness' sake."

Now, what of the earlier ones? Do you like a conceited brag? Of course, you don't; you prefer meekness, after all. Do you admire a boy of girl that has done you wrong and feels happy over it? You think they should feel sorry for doing you ill. That's what Jesus has in mind when He speaks of those who mourn.

There is just one quality left of which we do not feel sure: the poor in spirit. Let us think for just a moment. One who is poor in spirit wants to become richer, at least if he knows that he needs to be. The only way to grow stronger and nobler and better in every way is to feel

poor in spirit. Else we stay just where we are, or even go backward. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

THE ROYAL INVITATION

Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus' idea in coming to the earth was not to teach us a lot of rules and requirements which we must follow in order to earn eternal life; but rather to put His own shoulder under the burden which proved heavier than we could bear.

The Jews of His day had found it impossible to live up to the requirements of God's law; because human nature has grown weaker and weaker as men have disobeyed. Instead of looking forward to the Redeemer who had been promised, and praying God to forgive them for the sake of that coming Redeemer, as God had taught them, they made law after law and rule upon rule, hoping that by setting those requirements before them they might be stimulated into perfect obedience. As a result, when Jesus came the people who cared at all about God were burdened down by commandments which they could not possibly keep; while many had thrown up the idea entirely.

Jesus came to set men free from the slavery of sin and also from the terror of the law that

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hung over them with the threat of punishment in case they did not obey. But Jesus' way of saving was not merely to take upon Himself the guilt of sin; it was also by supplying strength to those who believe in Him, so that they shall be able to cope successfully with the power of sin and overcome it. The laws of the Jews were something on the outside. Jesus came to give power that could help men from the inside.

Because in this week's passage we have this invitation of Jesus to everyone who is bent under the burden of sin, we are accustomed to call it: "The Royal Invitation."

The figure of the yoke, though, suggests something quite different from royalty. It is taken from the roadside and the farm. It makes all the difference in the world for one animal that is harnessed to pull a load whether his partner is strong or weak; for between the two the weight must be moved. Jesus here assures us that if we trust in Him, He'll take His share in conveying the load. He will be our partner under the same yoke with us. That makes the burden for us light.

THE HEROIC INVITATION

Mark 8:34-37

The Royal Invitation is a call to come to Jesus. The invitation we learn to-day is a call to follow.

Him. These two calls are not alike. The first call was an offer to save the unsaved. We cannot save ourselves, so that Jesus has to do everything for us, when we put ourselves into His care. But after He has saved us, then the time has come to follow Him all the way. That's the reason why the second call does not sound as easy as the first one.

Though Jesus must do the saving in the first place, He cannot do the Christian living for us. He can do it with us; but we must also do the walking and serving ourselves. He can and will give us the necessary strength; but we must do the striving and the struggling. If we think so much of the pleasures which the world offers that we prefer to enjoy them rather than to do the Master's work more perfectly; if we have our hearts set on making a big show before others, rather than on doing quietly some needed service, which was not noticed by others and is not likely to be noticed when it is done; if in any way we think of ourselves rather than of Christ's pleasure, then we go down.

It may seem strange that Jesus should first speak of the easy yoke and the light burden that await us when we follow Him, and should afterward begin to mention the cross which we must carry after Him; but that is the way of life. The soul cannot grow except as it lives for its Maker. When it is turned on itself it shrinks;

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when it reaches out to others and looks up to God it expands.

Child Version: "When Jesus had called the people to Him, together with His disciples, He said to them: 'If anybody volunteers to be My disciple, he must no longer think of his own advantages and his own pleasures, but he must give up these things. Instead, he should take up his cross and follow Me. Anyone who tries to get all the enjoyments out of life that he can arrange for himself will never get any real enjoyment; but everyone who gives up his pleasures for My sake and for My service, will have the best time ever.'

"Suppose a man could get all the money in the world, but in doing it he loses his soul; what good will it do him? How could he ever get enough in return for his soul?"

THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

Mark 10:43-45

In the market place of a foreign city not long ago a well-dressed man was walking rapidly toward the railway station. He wore a high silk hat; patent leather shoes; kid gloves, and in his fingers hung an ivory-headed cane. To all appearance he was a gentleman of the first order.

A step or two behind him walked his servant

girl. She looked not more than fifteen. In her hands she carried her master's heavy suitcase. The labour caused her back to be painfully bent. The man walked rapidly to reach the train in good time and she must keep up with her master or receive a severe scolding. Of course, it was easy enough for him to walk fast, because he went empty-handed.

The most remarkable part of it is that in that particular country that thoughtless fellow was called a gentleman, just because he was able to pay a servant girl for carrying his suitcase. Had he carried the thing himself, his neighbours' eyes would have followed him with expressions of scorn. Or had he in a fit of kindness relieved the girl of her burden for a while, whoever met him would have said: "Why, he is no gentleman; look there; he is carrying his own suitcase." Because the unwritten law of those people who call themselves Christian is "I came not to minister; but to be ministered unto."

Child Version: "Jesus said to His disciples when they were quarrelling among themselves as to who should receive greatest honour: 'You should not act like heathens. If any of you like to be more thought of than the rest, you should help the rest more than does anybody else. The one who expects to stand highest among you must serve you most. For even the Son of Man did

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not come to be served by others, but to serve others and to give up His own life in order to save others.' ”

THE WHOLE LAW

Mark 12:30, 31

God did not make merely a part of man; He made him completely. And Jesus did not come to earth in order to save a part of us; He came to save us entirely. It must have proven very fruitless, had He won back a person's intellect, without recovering his heart; or a person's heart, without getting hold of his will. The very idea sounds absurd, does it not, of Jesus saving one part of a person without saving him completely.

No less absurd is it, when you come to think of it, when people fancy that they can serve God part of their lives, say on Sundays, but not during the rest of the week; or that they can set apart some of their money for His service and then play the devil with the remainder. Still, there are quite a number of folks that try to do it.

But loving our Saviour a little bit, and paying attention to Him occasionally is really just as impossible and ridiculous. There are boys and girls who say, or at least think, “Well, I'll attend Sunday school; but I don't care to prepare my Bible Lesson every day. And I am willing to

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contribute a few pennies to God's work, if my homefolks give them to me; but I don't care to take any of my spending money. That's asking too much."

Jesus, you notice, looked at things differently. He said, though in a different language: "God has a right to your whole heart, to your entire soul, to all your mind and to every item of strength you have. It is His, for He made you. It is mine, for I am the Saviour."

Neither did He forget about those other boys and girls we know. "Put yourself into their place, and care as much for them as for yourself," He said.

THE GOLDEN TEXT OF THE BIBLE

John 3:14-16

Now for the Golden Text of the Bible; who knows it? Never in all the world was another such a verse written. It is so wonderful that numbers and numbers of people right around us, who have heard it, do not believe it. And we who do believe it do not fully understand it. It is the most striking illustration of how God's ways are higher than our ways.

The first surprising thing is that our heavenly Father should have so much love for us that He gave up His only Son, whom He loved so unspeakably. We have not given Him very much

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reason to love us that way, have we? It must be just natural for Him.

But it is just as surprising that our Saviour should be willing to leave His home in heaven for the sake of saving us. He knew what was going to happen; but that did not keep Him back. He came to suffer in order to help us out. There never was a greater hero than Jesus Christ.

When the hosts of Israel were travelling through the desert their sins caused the appearance among them of numerous fiery, poisonous serpents. In order to test the people's faith in God, Moses was commanded to cast a brazen serpent and to place it up so high that everyone could see it if he wanted to. Then word was sent throughout the camp that whoever had been bitten by a serpent would be healed if he looked at that brazen serpent. So it happened. Some people did not believe the message. They thought it was altogether too simple. Those unbelievers died of the sting. But everyone who looked at the brazen serpent was immediately healed.

Just so, Jesus said to Nicodemus who came to visit Him one night, the Son of Man must be lifted up on the cross, so that everyone who believes the simple message of salvation through Him, might at once be saved from the power of sin, and be a child of God.

Child Version: Jesus said: "Just as Moses in the Desert put the brazen serpent up on a pole so that people who were dying from stings by fiery serpents could see it and live, so the Son of Man, our Saviour, must be lifted up on the cross so that everyone who looks at Him and believes, may not die, but live with Him forever.

"For God so loved you and me that He gave His only Son and sent Him into the world so that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost but live with Him forever and ever."

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

John 14:1-3

Next to the Twenty-third Psalm this passage of Scripture is read most frequently, and by non-Christian people it is heard even more often than the Shepherd Psalm. In every life, however rich may be its sunshine, there are cloudy days. Some people experience just one trouble after another. As a matter of fact, were it not for the clouds of life, our hearts would grow much harder than they do; just as the earth becomes hard after perpetual sunshine. It frequently happens that a home in which Jesus had been forgotten, is stricken by sickness or death. Then the hearts that had grown thoughtless are once more turned toward God. Among families that serve the Lord and remember Him in worship,

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the ties which bind our lives on earth to heaven grow stronger when a loved one passes on to the mansions above.

It would not be wholesome for us to think of heaven so much that we forget how to live in the world; but most of us are not much in danger of that. We are so wrapped up in the excitements and the worries of the world that we give scarcely a thought to heaven. It is well to consider at times what way we are going; for the time comes when we can no longer decide that. Our preparation is here and now.

It was Jesus' own way of comforting His loved ones to point them to the mansions above. He reminds the troubled heart that life is not all there is to it. The trials we meet by the way are as nothing in comparison to the glory that awaits us yonder.

The best way of all is to start right now to live in heaven. We can do it in just one way: by letting Jesus have complete control over our lives. Shall we not tell Him that we are willing to please Him every moment? Let us ask Him to do with us exactly what seems wise to Him, in order that we may become better workers for Him each day and more perfectly prepared to meet Him.

SECTION VI

CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

THE SEVEN WORDS

*Luke 23:34, 43; John 19:26, 27; Mark 15:34, 36;
John 19:30; Luke 23:46*

JESUS died for us. His death was unspeakably painful, for they nailed Him to the cross. Nails were driven through His blessed hands and feet; a crown of thorns was pressed upon His sacred brow. The blood flowed from His many wounds, and the thirst He suffered cannot be imagined. All this He suffered for you and me.

But in the midst of His terrible pain He never forgot others. He prayed for the men who crucified Him. He offered a robber forgiveness for his sins and promised him salvation. He looked down from the cross and saw His mother standing there, heartbroken and lonely. Then He saw His young disciple John, whom He so greatly loved, and even while He was dying for the sins of the world He arranged that John should take care of His mother and be another son to her.

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But there was a moment when He felt that the heavenly Father was no longer near Him. In order that we who believe in Him might live forever with Him in the presence of our Father in heaven, instead of being lost forever, Jesus had to feel for awhile that the Father's face was turned from Him. In order that He might never leave us or forsake us, He was for a time forsaken of God. This really was the greatest suffering of all.

At last His sufferings were done. The heart that had always beat with so much love for us could stand the strain no longer. When His work was finished Jesus commended His soul to the Father.

Are we not willing that He should have our lives after He paid so great a price for us?

These are the sentences which Jesus spoke from the cross. We call them "The Seven Words:"

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!

To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.

Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!

My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?

I thirst!

It is finished!

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!

HE ROSE AGAIN

Matthew 28:1-4

If our grave were the last of us we might well be tempted to ask occasionally whether life is worth the living. There are some people, it is true, who get considerable fun out of life, and if it is good fun, they are certainly entitled to it. But for a great number of folks after they have grown up the struggle to keep soul and body together is very severe. The need of food, clothing and shelter,—and occasional sickness coming in between,—make most people work constantly to make ends meet. It would be a pity to think that for such people this life is all there is to be enjoyed.

But Jesus taught differently. He told a story once of a rich man who had all that heart could wish and who did not care a particle how the poor man at his gate got along. But after both were dead the tables were turned. The rich man suffered torment while the poor man enjoyed the glories of heaven.

The point is that the grave is not the end of us; our souls continue to live after our bodies are dead, and some day we shall rise again, body and soul together.

The greatest proof of this is the resurrection of Christ. His enemies nailed Him to the cross

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and saw Him die. His friends took His body and placed it in a tomb. That seemed to be the end of it. But it was not. On the third day He rose from the dead. There was a heavy stone rolled against the opening of the sepulchre; but that stone was rolled away and Jesus rose out of the grave. That's the reason we celebrate Easter. It means Christ's victory over death.

It means just as much our own victory over death. Jesus called us to come to Him and then to follow Him all the way. Where he went we can go, too, and we will. His rising from the grave assures everyone who believes in Him that we too shall in His good time rise from our graves and serve Him body and soul.

TELL IT TO YOUR FRIENDS

Matthew 28:5-7

The death of Jesus came to His disciples as a terrible blow. He had always up until that time shown Himself master of every situation. The people of Nazareth who tried to cast Him from the brow of the hill were confounded and let Him pass from them unharmed. In the temple, when they planned to get hold of Him, again He walked out of their midst untouched. On the other hand He had shown power enough to drive out the money-changers from the house of God.

TELL IT TO YOUR FRIENDS 97

The prophecies about Him had almost invariably for their theme the Prince of the house of David. The Messiah was to be a conquerer and a ruler, whose dominion should stretch from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth. Such close and intimate disciples as James and John were constantly hoping for that day when Jesus should assume authority, so that they themselves might be among the first in the land.

These hopes were all dashed to earth with the crucifixion of Christ. In the minds of His followers there was nothing left but a blank. They walked around without hope and their prospects were utterly dark. Then the unexpected happened. Jesus appeared to them. He still lived, and still was near them. Instead of having lost, He had won, and He now invites His followers to enter upon the results of His victory.

That was an entirely new view of things. It made them see the spiritual, the unseen side of things more than ever before. They took heart again and were soon prepared to tell about the life, the death and the resurrection of their Lord.

A beautiful story in John's Gospel, Chapter 20: 11-18, should be read in connection with this selection. It tells of the first person to whom Jesus appeared, and who went at once to tell her friends.

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TELL IT TO THE WORLD—THE GREAT COMMAND-
MENT

Matthew 28:16, 18-20

The last and great commandment. Who will obey it!

When Jesus began His years of ministry He was led by the Spirit to a mountain, where Satan tempted Him. The spirit of evil boasted that all the kingdoms of the earth were His, and in a sense it was true; for the people had left God and had become slaves of Satan.

Now Jesus has finished His work and stands on a mountain again. But things have changed since about three years before; for Jesus now can say that all authority is given unto Him. In between there had been great struggle. As when a serpent strikes at the heel of a man, and causes him excruciating pains, so Satan had made Jesus suffer intensely; but Jesus had overcome. Those three years present the greatest story of a life of love and heroism that was ever written.

But only a few people knew of it; though the whole world was in need of that knowledge. A man of God not long ago thought of Jesus as having returned to heaven and walking with Gabriel. He told the archangel of His sufferings and His death. The angel walked on in silence, then asked: "Does anybody in the world know

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that?" Jesus replied: "I have told my disciples to go and tell it everywhere." For a while Gabriel walked on in deep meditation, then turned up his face to our Saviour inquiring: "But, Master, suppose your disciples do not go and tell." Jesus said: "I have no other way."

Child Version: "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to a mountain where Jesus had promised to meet them. And Jesus came and said to them: 'All power is given me in heaven and on earth. You shall go therefore, and teach the gospel to all the people of the world, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Keep on telling them the things you have heard and seen of me. And lo, I am with you always, as long as the world shall last. Amen.'"

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

Acts 1:7-9

Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead He ascended into heaven. During those forty days He appeared to many of His disciples, so that most of them could no longer doubt about His resurrection. It was quite necessary that He should do this; for they had never thought that such a thing was possible.

Counting forty days from Easter Sunday

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brings the day of His ascension to Thursday, and many churches celebrate this day as well as Easter and Pentecost.

We may wonder at times why Jesus did not stay on earth and help in the carrying on of the work. There were doubtless reasons in the mind of God which we do not know ; but some reasons appear on the surface. Jesus' home is in heaven. He lived on earth to accomplish a definite work ; so that, when that task was finished, He was ready to return. Then, we can only be in one place at one time, so that if Jesus had settled on one place, say Jerusalem, it should have been possible for only a limited number to be near Him. As He is now, He is near to us all everywhere. Again, He Himself said that He went to prepare a place for us. He wants to be there to give us a hearty welcome. Indeed, it would give us a lonely feeling to leave our loved ones on earth without being sure that we shall meet Jesus yonder.

Then, finally, Jesus said that unless He went He could not send the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit. And only when the disciples were filled by the Spirit could they go out and preach the Gospel all over the earth.

We shall learn later that after His humiliation Jesus was highly exalted. He had earned the Princeship over all the redeemed of God. But

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the government of Christ is being established upon earth through the faithful work of those who believe and obey Him. The Missionaries of the Cross are telling of Him in places where people never once heard the gospel. They have actually gone out to the ends of the earth, and Jesus is always with them. Then the men and women who believe in Him go out and tell others about Him. In this way the word keeps spreading all the time.

Child Version: "Jesus said to His disciples when He was just ready to leave them and they had asked Him when He should come back on the clouds of heaven: 'It is not the Father's plan that you should know dates and particulars which are entirely in His own hands. But I will tell you this: That for the work which God wants you to do you shall receive the needed strength; for the Holy Spirit will come upon you. And you shall go out telling about my life and death and resurrection everywhere for the salvation of men, in Jerusalem, in Judæa, in Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.'

"When He had said this, while they stood looking at Him, he rose from the earth upward toward the skies, and a cloud covered Him so that they could not see Him any longer."

While the disciples were looking upward, two

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messengers from heaven told them that Jesus would some day come back in a similar way as He ascended, but that they should go to Jerusalem just as He had commanded.

SECTION VII

THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-4

PENTECOST means the fiftieth day. It is a Greek name applied to the Hebrew festival that occurred fifty days after the Passover and had therefore been celebrated for the first time fifty days after the Israelites had left Egypt.

Fifty days after Jesus had risen from the dead, and therefore ten days after He had ascended into heaven, He sent His spirit upon His disciples as they were gathered at the feast in Jerusalem. They had prayed much during the days that intervened since Jesus passed out of their sight, and were waiting for the Spirit to come upon them, just as Jesus had promised. Without the Holy Spirit they could not go out into the world to tell of Christ's death, because only the Spirit of God as He works upon the hearts of men is able to convince people of its truth.

The coming of the Holy Spirit had been prophesied eight hundred years before by Joel.

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Of course, the Spirit of God had always existed, just as Christ had always lived; and we read about God's Spirit resting upon the prophets; but never had He come so mightily and at the same time so generally as then.

The Spirit of Christ is still with us. What He did for the disciples He is willing to do for us. They did not previously have the courage or the wisdom to speak to others about Christ; but the Spirit of God gave them just what they needed. Take Peter, for instance. Without the Spirit of God he had been afraid to let a servant-girl know that he was a follower of Jesus; but after the Spirit had come into him, he stood right up among mockers and laughers about religion and preached Jesus Christ. That's what the Spirit does for a man.

Besides, the Spirit works upon those to whom we speak, in a way that is impossible for us. He convinces people when all our arguing would not do a particle of good. When we feel a drawing to Christ, that is God's Spirit working within us.

LIVING SACRIFICES

Romans 12:1-2

If ever a man was more consecrated to the Master than the apostle Paul, I would like to see him, wouldn't you? As a boy and as a young

man he had not known about Jesus. As a student at the University, he was taught to hate the lowly Nazarene. You see, he was a Hebrew, and as far as he knew there could not be any other religion. He was right about that, as far as he knew; but he did not know that the Christian religion was just a step farther, for it takes in every good and lasting part of the Jew's religion, and then fills it out by having the Messiah for whom the Jews are still looking.

According to his training Paul was very bitter against the Christians. Wherever he could he made it hard for them. He went into their homes and arrested them, to be brought before judges and then to be imprisoned. Not content with hurting them all he could in his own country, he went out to Damascus to trouble them there. But there God said: "No further." Paul heard the voice of Christ and saw a vision. From that day he was changed into another man. His mind was transformed. His body and his soul became a living sacrifice upon the altar of God's service.

He enjoyed his Christian life and felt sorry for any who did not understand it. He could sympathize with them; for he had been there; but, oh, how he longed to make them see things in the right way!

One of two things is constantly taking place within our selves: Either we are growing in the

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likeness of Jesus Christ, or we are growing to like the world and to be like worldlings. Which way is it with us? There is one way to make sure: if we dedicate our whole selves to the service of Jesus Christ, we shall grow in His likeness.

Child Version: "The Apostle Paul said: 'Let me ask of you, brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, for the sake of God's love for us, that you volunteer in the service of the kingdom of God with body and soul, keeping your body pure for Him and your thoughts holy. Do not follow sinful pleasures so that you become like worldlings, but follow the pleasures of service for God and others, to become like Jesus. Then you can best show others the good and helpful and perfect will of God.'"

MY BODY IS A TEMPLE

1 Corinthians 3:16, 17

With the coming of Christ the services in the temple at Jerusalem lost their meaning. The sacrifices offered there were to point forward to the time when Jesus should be a sacrifice; so that when Jesus had actually offered up Himself upon the cross the rituals and ceremonies of the temple had been fulfilled.

During His life Jesus taught us that God was

to be worshipped not simply in the Jerusalem temple; nor on Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans thought He was exclusively; but people everywhere should worship Him in spirit and in truth. Thus the human body was regarded by Christ as the greatest temple of God.

And a wonderful temple it is. Not even Solomon's temple was as delicately and charmingly constructed. The construction of our eyes; the adjustment of our ears; the manipulations of our fingers; the pendulations of our limbs; the beating of the heart, and all the other parts of the body, how wonderfully they have been prepared. "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and motion how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god!" said Shakespeare.

It would be a shame to hurt this handiwork of God in any way. It would be a most wicked sin to abuse and weaken its powers. Instead, it is God's plan that we should work together with Him in keeping it strong and clean. This building was planned to be God's temple, and no greater honour can come to it than that the Spirit of God dwells there, and out of the body we worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Child Version: "The Apostle Paul wrote through the Spirit of God: 'Do you not know

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that your bodies are temples of God? Just as churches are buildings for the worship of God, so are our bodies made to have our souls within them worship God. The man who ruins a church is severely punished; but the boy or girl who does evil with his own body ruins himself and brings God's curse upon him. For God made us to be holy for His service, body and soul.' "

May we suggest that the Temperance song bearing the title of this lesson be sung and memorized in this connection.

GREATEST IS LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

We have committed some passages to memory that not many people to-day could recite. But now we have reached one again that is in the minds of the many. People who do not otherwise show much love for religion have a soft spot nevertheless for this passage. They cannot very well get around the fact that it rings true, every word of it; and that its principles are splendid to live by. It is undeniable that if everybody were willing to make this chapter his creed, the world would be a much finer place to live in.

The subject of this chapter is love; not charity in the sense of giving things to needy people, for it says right there that without love the giving

of gifts does no good, and we know that, too. It is not love in the sense in which young men and young women are in the habit of speaking of it, either. It is most like that neighbourly feeling of which Jesus spoke in the parable of the good Samaritan. But it goes even beyond that. It is like the love of Christ who gave Himself for others.

The part we are to learn at this time shows us how the most admirable things we might do lose their virtue if our deeds are not mixed with love. You must have noticed the same thing yourself. A less skilful teacher has a greater hold on her pupils than a very bright one, if only she has more love. The heart is bigger than the head. When someone has done things for you that seem real thoughtful, but you find that it was for quite another reason than care for you, the whole thing loses its meaning for you. In the same way people who profess faith in Christ without showing kindness to their fellowmen, do not help the cause of Christ very much.

WHAT LOVE DOES

1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13

The predicates that are supplied with the subject, Love, are so interesting and practical that we shall enjoy taking a more intimate look at

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them. Suppose we use these verses just as they were intended for our everyday life and see what they mean to us. Then they read somewhat like this:

When we have plenty of love in our hearts we can stand a lot of annoyance from others; we don't feel hurt when someone else is more successful than we or gets more praise from others than people see fit to give us; we do not go around boasting about our own fine qualities; or talk as if nobody else were quite as bright and capable as ourselves.

When we have plenty of love in our hearts we behave to others with the utmost kindness; we do not try to get ahead of others by hook or crook; we don't get huffy over everything that crosses us and we don't suspect everybody of having wrong intentions.

When we have love we certainly do not take delight in doing anyone wrong; on the other hand we are happy when the right triumphs. In short, we can stand anything because we are confident that God is controlling the world. We have faith that though everything else may fail, the thoughts of God will come to pass.

And though all else comes to an end, love like that shall never end. It is eternal.

We might read the passage we are memorizing this way:

Child Version: "If I can talk like an angel, but without love, my words are like brass and bells; they mean nothing.

"If I can preach and teach and know God's word; and believe everything God ever said, but without love, I am nothing.

"And though I give away everything that I have, even my body to be burned, but without love, it means nothing.

"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous; love is not proud or stuck up. One who loves does not behave badly; is not selfish; is not easily provoked; does not suspect everybody of evil plans. One who is loving is not glad when wicked things are done, but when right things are done. He is willing to stand much; he has faith and hope and endurance.

"Love never fails; prophecies will come to an end; strange languages lose their force; things we learn are forgotten; but faith, hope and love remain, and the greatest of these is love."

AIMING FOR THE MARK

Phillipians 3:13-14

Unfortunate indeed is the self-satisfied person, for he cannot go forward. It is told of Thorwaldsen, the great sculptor, that when he had finished the statue of the Christ, he grew utterly

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melancholy. There it stood in the Metropolitan church at Copenhagen, where everyone who saw it went into ecstasies over its beauty; but the sculptor felt ill at ease. For he realized that he had reached his limit. He could never surpass that masterpiece.

Of course, a Christian who keeps his eyes on Jesus can never grow satisfied with himself; because the very personality of Christ is challenging him all the time. He must grow more like to his Master; and our Master is absolutely perfect. Unless we fancy, then, that we have reached perfection we simply have to keep on striving to move onward without let-up.

That's the way Paul felt about it. He must have been a good ways farther on the way Christward than we; but he was still pressing forward, never content with himself, for he knew himself too well to think he was anywhere near perfection.

It is remarkable how the greatest saints are least pleased with themselves. And yet, we little fellows sit down sometimes to look at ourselves and to say: "Well, if the rest were all as good as I am, things would not look so bad." Oh, we don't say exactly those words, but we think and act like it.

I for one wish to take these words of Paul for my motto. I don't want to drift backward; I want to press forward. Don't you?

THINK OF THESE THINGS 113

Child Version: "Brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus, I do not feel that I have reached the highest aims which God has set before me. But this one thing I do: Instead of worrying over what might have been, I keep trying by the help of God to serve Him better every day. I just keep on, hoping some day by His grace to be what He wants me to be. I know that God has called me into His wonderful service, and that He expects me to use the talents He has given me for the highest service I can possibly render."

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Phillipians 4:8

Every thought that comes into our minds makes a groove there. Just as when a wagon passes over a soft road and leaves a track, so is it when a thought comes to us, if we keep it for a while. It leaves a trace behind. Next time a wagon comes along that same road, it is more likely to go through that same track that had been made than in any other particular part of the road. Next time we think again, our minds are likely to move along the tracks that were left there by those particular thoughts.

But in some way or other our minds are active all the time. The supreme question is, therefore, what are we thinking about. If at this moment

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I think something lofty, it will be easier after a while to think again something lofty; or if I pay attention to something pleasant, it becomes easier for me to entertain pleasant thoughts. After you have written one composition well, it is easier to write another one well; and after you have worked out one problem in arithmetic, the next one, though a little harder, does not seem so difficult. It is precisely so with our continual thinking. It prepares for other thoughts.

Our thinking affects even our physical appearance; not the form perhaps, but certainly the expression:

“Beautiful thoughts make a beautiful soul,
And a beautiful soul makes a beautiful face.”

The one verse we are to learn now is mastered most easily if first we go over the adjectives by themselves, this way: True, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report. Then, when we have them well, we can add the rest.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER BUILDING

11 Peter 1:5-7

Should we feel inclined to be content with our present achievements, there would be some uneasiness, very likely, after reading this list of qualifications which the apostle Peter enumerates for us. He knew what he was talking about;

for it did not come particularly easy with him to multiply virtues. From all appearances he had but a few to start off with and was somewhat uncertain in his additions during his earlier days. Faith; virtue; knowledge; temperance; patience; godliness; brotherly kindness and love; there we counted them all. There are seven of them and we all agree that seven is a perfect number.

It will take considerable true living to become master at them all; yet, when you come to look them over they are like the poor man's children, we cannot spare a single one of them. We certainly cannot get along without faith; for then we should despair. It is faith in some form or other that holds the world together. Nor could we afford to throw virtue overboard; for with it our selfrespect must go; and life is not worth the living without that. Lack of knowledge would make stupids out of us; we cannot very well afford that. Intemperance means, as the word suggests, losing one's temper, doing things to excess, talking too much, lazying too much, or anything not moderate. It is the quality of the brute, while temperateness is the trait of the gentleman.

Of patience most of us have very little and our lack of it brings us no end of trouble. The sooner we add to it, the better it will be for everybody around. Godliness sounds pretty old-fashioned; but, remember the First Psalm. We

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are either godly or ungodly. Brotherly kindness we need every day ; and we should do to others—you know.

Last and greatest, Love. One might as well spend his life in a prison cell, where not a ray of sunshine penetrates, as to live without love. Yes, the allrounded person must possess these seven virtues.

CONCLUSION

THE NEW AGE

HEAVEN ON EARTH

Revelation 22:1-4

THE beloved disciple who once used to sit next to the Master and was His most intimate companion remained longest upon earth of any of the apostles. For the sake of his faith he suffered bitter persecution. It was during an exile for Christ's sake on the isle of Patmos that the Spirit of God gave him to see most marvellous things that must in some form or another come to pass. Wise people have tried to determine the meaning of every vision he saw ; but few agree in their conclusions. One thing, however, stands absolutely sure ; this entire book of Revelation is an expansion of the words which we find in John's Gospel from the lips of Jesus : "In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world."

Our memory passage describes in a wonderful way the appearance of things when sin

has been blotted out and the love of God rules everywhere. Through the sin of man the beauties of the ancient Paradise went to loss and ruin; but through the life and death of Christ another and a better Paradise became possible.

The most enjoyable thing about this new Paradise is that Jesus is always present. We shall have His constant fellowship. It is true that He is with us always; but not in that close and personal way in which He shall be among us then. And when we see His wounded hands and feet, and the spear thrust in His side, the thought shall be ever fresh to us: "It is His grace that brought me here." Our songs will be many, and they shall be hearty enough; but their theme shall be: "Glory to the Lamb of God."

Meanwhile, we are still living on the earth; and the best way to glorify Him just now is so to live that people will say or at least think: "There is a follower of Christ. How nobly he lives!"

CHRIST LOVES THE CHURCH

Revelation 22:14-17

Occasionally we meet with people who seem to take extreme delight in slandering the church. Perhaps it keeps the church on her mettle and so turns out for the better, after all; but unfor-

Unfortunately those who listen may be tempted to believe those evil-speakers.

The great majority of God's people are still to be found in the churches; while practically all the people that actually damage the morals of young and old are found outside the churches. There are exceptions; but they are rare. A child of God may go wrong; and a wicked man may get among the church-people without true repentance. Moreover there are quite a number of decent people not in the church, who are really living on the decency of their parents that were in the church. At any rate, Jesus so loved the church that He calls her His Bride, while He Himself is the Bridegroom.

He talked about these things early in His ministry on earth. While John the Baptist was still preaching by the river Jordan, Jesus exclaimed that His disciples should not fast so long as the Bridegroom was with them.

That's saying a good deal, isn't it? A bridegroom is usually proud of his bride. He has gone through considerable trouble to make sure of her and when finally he has wooed and won her, he considers her quite a prize. Now, that's the way Jesus feels about the church.

As for the church, her feeling toward Christ should certainly not be less loving. The bride longs to be with her bridegroom. She is not quite happy unless he is at her side. That is the

way those who believe in Christ should feel about Him. Jesus told us before He left that we should be on the watch for His coming again. It will be joy to those who want Him near; but it will be bitter grief to those who have not cared to live for Him. But that would be one's own fault, for we have as the final word: "And whosoever will may come." Are you coming? or have you already come to Him? It will mean very little to have committed these rare gems of sacred literature to memory unless they become part of us. Jesus Christ is the true word of God. To love and serve Him is to be filled with the word of God. We do not know Him unless we love Him. But He still stands at the door and knocks. Let Him in.

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